

April 4, 2009

Glen N. Gray  
37104 Hwy 83  
Swan Lake, MT 59911

Montana State Senate  
State Capital  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Senators:

I was recently spittin' and whittlin' with a neighbor about the exciting opportunity the Montana Working Forests Initiative represents for Montanans in general and the virtues of HB 674 and HB 669 specifically. Suddenly my neighbor said, "shucks Glen, your just interested in preserving a place to chase mountain lions around with your dogs". His response set me back for about a half a second. It's true, I am interested in maintaining places to hunt, fish, hike, pick berries, wild mushrooms and sometimes to just relax under the shade of a big ponderosa pine. It's also true for thousands of other Montanans. But the picture, and my interest, is much, much bigger than just preserving recreational opportunities. These two bills have tremendous potential benefit for all Montanans, Montana's wildlife, Montana's timber industry, Montana's Schools Trusts, Montana's tax payers and Montana's rural lifestyle.

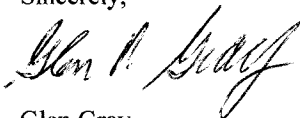
Although I am now retired, I have been a natural resource manager in the Swan and Blackfoot valleys for over 32 years. I am intimately familiar with the potential of the habitat types in and around the Potomac Valley for growing trees, growing grass and providing a unique diversity of wildlife habitats. Plum Creek Timber Company's decision to divest of their lands threatens habitat fragmentation, stability of the timber industry, public access, urban encroachment, cost of fire suppression and our rural lifestyle. HB 674 provides a unique opportunity to block up over 25,000 acres of Plum Creek's land intermingled in and around state school trust land under the management of the Montana Department of Natural Resources.

I strongly believe this is the right agency to manage these lands. The DNRC has consistently demonstrated a commitment to maintaining a sustainable timber harvest while maintaining water quality, healthy fisheries and a diversity of quality wildlife habitat. The additional timber base will substantially add to the financial return to Montana's School Trust Funds. It would contribute to stability of the local timber industry and guarantee continued public access. Acquisition of these Plum Creek lands will substantially enhance management efficiency and management effectiveness.

Montana's timber industry contributes importantly to local economies and to providing jobs through the harvest of Montana's natural and renewable timber resources. But, the preservation of forest health, the maintenance of a diversity of healthy wildlife habitats and controlling forest fire fuel build up is also dependant on maintaining our timber industry's infrastructure. Colorado and Arizona have already lost their timber industry infrastructure, their sawmills, their pulp mills and their loggers. They no longer have a way to effectively or economically respond to forest insect outbreaks, forest disease, blow down, or stand stagnation through over stocking. HB669 revolving loan fund will contribute importantly to maintaining the presence of the timber industry in Montana.

HB 674 and HB 669 are important to the future of Montana, Montana's tax payers, Montana's timber industry, Montana School Trusts, Montana's forest health, Montana's rural lifestyle. I encourage your support. Thanks!

Sincerely,



Glen Gray